A SERMON,

PREACHED AT

HORSLYDOWN, SOUTHWARK,

LONDON,

The NINETEENTH of the ELEVENTH MONTH 1769.

By *SAMUEL FOTHERGILL.*

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Sermon, which was preached at Horſly-down, at the cloſe of a religious viſit to the families belonging to that meeting, was printed at Rhode-Iſland in the year 1773; and many who have peruſed it being deſirous it might be reprinted in England, the Editor, apprehending it might render it more extenſively uſeful, has complied with their requeſt.

It is not improbable but ſome may object to the preſent publication, on account of its having been preached to a ſelect meeting at the concluſion of a private viſit to the members of it: but let it be remembered, that it has already been in print ſeveral years, and diſperſed through many parts of America; and

and the preacher ſets out in ſuch general terms, as convey an idea that the purport of what he was about to deliver, was not merely circumſcribed within the narrow limits of that particular meeting. And that it may tend to promote and increaſe that inward piety and practical religion which it ſo ſtrongly enforces, is the ſincere deſire of

THE EDITOR.

A SERMON,

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SERMON, &c.

A Solemn ſummons, which the Almighty gave through his prophet Joel, to a people whom he had owned above all the families of the earth, at a time when they had revolted and departed from him, has been revived in my mind, with an apprehenſion that the ſame authority requires the republication of it in this day, to a people likewiſe highly favoured of him, and who have in like manner departed from their firſt love.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, ſanctify a faſt, call a ſolemn aſſembly; gather the people, ſanctify the congregation, aſſemble the elders, gather the children, and thoſe that ſuck the breaſts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her cloſet: let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them ſay, Spare thy people, O Lord! and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen ſhould rule over them: wherefore ſhould they ſay among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.[a]

[a] Joel ii. 15, 16, 17, 18.

As I am about to conclude, perhaps finally conclude, my labours among you in this quarter, I would query with ſome, with many that are preſent, whether they have not heard intelligibly the ſound of the trumpet, calling them with a degree of certainty to ariſe and prepare themſelves for the battle?

My brethren and ſiſters, among whom I have been conſtrained in the overflowings of the Father's love to labour in a private capacity, breaking, I hope I may ſay, a little bread from houſe to houſe; the everlaſting goſpel has been preached among you, with all the force of pathetic energy, with all the tenderneſs of divine compaſſion: let it not be ineffectual. The goſpel meſſage has been delivered with ſuch indubitable clearneſs, that your judgments have been convinced; you have aſſented to the truth as it is in Jeſus: ſuffer not the impreſſion it has made upon your minds to be ſpeedily eraſed.

Far, very far, be it from me to think highly of myſelf, to exalt the officer, the miniſter; I would not that you ſhould hold any man's perſon in eſtimation; I am deeply ſenſible, that to me belongs bluſhing and confuſion of face: but I magnify mine office, and the power of him who has ſeen meet to employ me therein. I would endeavour to exalt in your view, the adorable condeſcenſion and goodneſs of the great Author of all our mercies, in that he has cauſed the trumpet to be renewedly ſounded

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in your borders: hear its important meſſage with ſuitable attention; let it rouſe and prepare all the ranks of the armies of our Iſrael, to engage in the glorious cauſe of our God: let the daughter of our Zion ariſe from the bed of indolence, from the lethargic ſtupor of a fatal forgetfulneſs, from all the deadening, benumbing gratifications of ſenſuality, and ſhake herſelf from the duſt of the earth, that ſhe may come up to the help of him who hath called her with an high and holy calling. The trumpet is blown in her ſtreets, and the alarm has been heard by all: Oh! let not its language be rendered unintelligible by the multiplicity of trivial things, that too much abſorb the minds of many. I am fully perſuaded, that the gracious viſitation of humbling melting goodneſs has been afreſh extended to individuals preſent, in, I had almoſt ſaid, a very memorable manner; nor will I recall the expreſſion, for if it be not treaſured up in your remembrance now for your profit and advantage, it will be memorable in that awful period, when every neglected mercy will appear deeply engraven in a dread hand-writing on the wall againſt us. Let me, therefore, tenderly entreat you, with all the warmth of unutterable affection, as a brother, as a fellow-pilgrim through the viciſſitudes of time, to the unmixed joys of an happy eternity, that you will no longer neglect the offers of mercy, or turn a deaf ear to the reproofs of inſtruction.

I feel my mind covered with that boundleſs love, that wiſhes, that ardently deſires, you may, indeed, be wiſe for yourſelves; for although I

may be deficient in many qualifications of a goſpel miniſter, I am not wanting in that pure, diſintereſted love, which ſeeks not yours, but you unto the Lord.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, ſanctify a faſt.

If we were but enough attentive to the ſound of the trumpet, we ſhould ſee the abſolute neceſſity of this ſanctified faſt, a faſt from every of theſe deluſive pleaſures and ſlaviſh attachments, that render the mind inſenſible of good.

Call a ſolemn aſſembly.

This branch of the ſummons, ſome may think, belongs only to a few, and we have no ſhare in the duty it enjoins. I confeſs I am not of that opinion; I think every individual has a ſhare in the inſtruction couched in it.

Call a ſolemn aſſembly. O you active ones! ſtop a while in your ſwift career; make a ſolemn pauſe; ſtand collected from every object that can gratify or delight the ſenſual part; labour diligently to aſſemble all the powers and faculties of the ſoul, that they may be ſanctified by him who gave them. I believe there is no uſeleſs, dead, inactive member in the church of God; and thoſe who can thus aſſemble the collected attention of a redeemed mind,

devoted

devoted to the divine will, thoſe have an undoubted right, from the higheſt authority, to call a holy convocation.

"We can do nothing againſt the truth, but for the truth," was the language of ſome formerly, who had indeed ſanctified an acceptable faſt. I muſt deſire that thoſe who, perhaps, cannot be ſo active in promoting this glorious cauſe among the ſons of men, as ſome who are called into more eminent ſtations in the church, may by a circumſpect care, over all their words and actions, ſee that they do nothing againſt the truth.

Call a ſolemn aſſembly, gather the people.

How ſcattered are many of the members of this quarter; ſcattered indeed, as ſheep without a ſhepherd; diſperſed up and down, in the dark vale of inſenſibility, and ſelf-forgetfulneſs; many upon the barren mountains of an empty profeſſion; loſt to all religious fellowſhip; unacquainted with that holy union, in which is the bond of peace. How many are the careleſs I have met with amongſt you, who, alas! it may be ſaid care for none of theſe things? O, you elders! who might have been as pillars in the Lord's houſe. You delegated ſhepherds, who might have adorned the firſt ranks in the armies of our Iſrael, if you had not ſitten down, and taken up a reſt ſhort of thoſe glorious abodes, which are prepared for them who ſteadily perſevere in the line of divine appointment. To you the call is,

Gather the people.

Am I my brother's keeper? [b] Let it ſuffice for me that I look to myſelf, and that my own family is in tolerable order, is a language that too much prevails. But Oh! that you had the cauſe of God more at heart; that you were more engaged to gather the people, that you might, with a fatherly care, overlook thoſe whoſe minds at preſent reſemble the barren deſart, the uncultivated wilderneſs; that you might comfort and encourage thoſe who tread the gloomy ſcenes of an adverſe allotment, as it were cut out from every joy, and alive to every painful ſenſibility. How would it comfort many of theſe if an experienced friend was now and then to drop into their families, and at times ſpeak a word in the openings of Divine Wiſdom, ſuitable to their ſeveral ſtates? I believe it would be a great means of gathering the people. Why ſhould your care be circumſcribed within the narrow limits of your own families, although they might be well regulated; but you might be more extenſively uſeful if thus engaged in the care of the houſhold of God: I am perſuaded that the Divine Being would be over you, and a bleſſing would attend your labours. It is not a time for us to dwell unconcerned in our ceiled houſes, when the houſe of God lies waſte. We have many of us the ſame tender connections as you: I myſelf have the ſame endearing attachments as ſome of you; the ſame ties of domeſtic love, as ſome of you; not leſs attentive to every relative and ſocial duty, than ſome of you: my nature is not harſh; my

[b] Gen. iv 9.

principles

principles much leſs ſo; yet I am made willing to leave all to come and labour with you, if ſo be I might be inſtrumental to rouſe any to a more arduous purſuit of their everlaſting intereſt: and I can freely acknowledge with humble thankfulneſs, that I never more fully experienced my peace to flow as a river, never could with greater joy ſay, *Return, O my ſoul! to the place of thy reſt; for the Lord thy God hath dealt bountifully with thee,*[c] than when I have been thus engaged, in extenſive private labours, viſiting the ſick, reviving the ſorrowful, encouraging the diſconſolate, ſtrengthening the weak, watching over and carefully admoniſhing the giddy, incautious youth; and I doubt not but you would have the words of peace in your own boſoms, if, as heads of the ſociety, you were more often thus employed in endeavouring to gather the people.

Sanctify the congregation, aſſemble the elders.

I have been deeply concerned to ſee ſome of the elders ſo deficient in filling the line of divine appointment; if they were more engaged to aſſemble under the holy influence of that power in which they ſhould move, they would many of them be commanded to

Blow the trumpet in Zion.

But I know of no ſtate harder to ſpeak to, more difficult to reach, than that of an elder, whoſe mind is overgrown by the earthly nature.

[c] Pſalm cxvi. 7.

O, earth,

O, earth, earth, earth! hear the word of the Lord.[a]

I do not recollect any other inſtance, in ſacred writ, where attention is demanded in a ſimilar manner, *O, earth, earth, earth!* thus thrice repeated, plainly ſignifying the great difficulty there is, in reaching to thoſe, who, as it were, are buried in the earth, whoſe minds are fixed in it.

Gather the children.

You that have the riſing youth under your care, let me call upon you, let me intreat you to——*gather the children.* Gather them from all the bewitching, enticing allurements of the world; gather their attention to that of God in their own minds. O, how have I ſecretly mourned to ſee the poor children ſo ſorrowfully neglected, ſo uninſtructed, ſo much eſtranged from that holy, divine principle, which would exceedingly beautify and enrich them! but, alas! how few parents are rightly qualified to teach their children the law of divine love, to inſtill into their tender minds proper ſentiments, to cultivate upon them thoſe impreſſions that would be of everlaſting advantage; and if the children, when the gracious viſitation of the Father of mercies moves upon their hearts, warming and animating them with the love of virtue, raiſing the ſecret

[a] Jer. xxii. 29.

ſigh

ſigh, and begetting deſires after heaven and holineſs: I ſay, if the children ſhould then aſk the negligent parents, what is this ſecret ſomething which I feel; this principle which impreſſes my mind with the love of virtue? what is it, what value ſhall I ſet upon it? How then can you give them ſuitable inſtruction? You cannot teach them obedience to its ſacred dictates, when your own example ſpeaks a language quite oppoſite. O, why ſhould the ſea-monſter be brought againſt you? *The ſea-monſter draweth forth the breaſt to the young, but the daughter of my people is become cruel, as the oſtrich in the wilderneſs, that leaveth her eggs in the ſand, to be hatched by the beams of the ſun, and conſidereth not that the foot of the paſſenger may cruſh them.*[e] The daughter of my people hath left her tender offspring to the uncertainty of being accidentally benefited, or, I ſhould rather ſay, to the mercy of God, unaſked, unfought, expoſed to all the dangers of a dreary wilderneſs, unaided, unaſſiſted, by the care of a natural parent; *the tongue of the ſucking child cleaveth to the roof of its mouth for thirſt; the children aſk bread, and there is none in many families to break it*;[f] they want to be nouriſhed by the ſincere milk of the word: but, alas!

The daughter of my people is become cruel.

O, you parents! you delegated ſhepherds! what account will you have to give when the Lord of the whole earth ariſeth to make inquiſition

[e] Lam. iv. 3. Job xxxix. 14, 15. [f] Lam. iv. 4.

for blood? Bear with me, my dear friends; flattery and ſmooth tales may pleaſe fools, but they will not pleaſe him, whom I deſire to ſerve in the goſpel of his ſon. All that is within me is moved while I thus earneſtly expoſtulate with you, on the behalf of the dear children; ſuffer me to entreat you for God's ſake, for your own ſoul's ſake, and for the ſake of the cauſe of truth.

Gather the children, and thoſe that ſuck the breaſts.

Thoſe who are filling themſelves with the world's conſolations, with the intoxicating pleaſures and amuſements of a degenerate age; wean them from theſe delights, gather them to the knowledge of themſelves, to a ſenſe of the mercies that are offered them, by the great Author of mercies, ancient and new.

While thy ſervant was buſied hither and thither, the man made his eſcape,—was the vain excuſe of the officer, to whoſe cuſtody a certain captive was committed, with the charge, *Take care of this man till I come, and if thou let him go, thy life ſhall go for his life.*[s] No plea of other engagements, nor even want of ability to diſcharge our duty towards our offspring, will ſtand us inſtead, if, when the Almighty queries with us, " What haſt thou done with thoſe lambs I left under thy care

[s] 1 Kings xx, 39, 40.

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" in the wilderneſs, thoſe tender offspring I gave thee in charge?" We have, through neglect, through unwatchfulneſs, ſuffered him or her to go, but we ſhall moſt certainly ſtand accountable for his or her life. I ſaid want of ability, becauſe I aſſuredly believe, that want of ability will be ſo far from a palliation of our crime, that it will rather increaſe our condemnation. Can we plead want of ability to him, who is always ready to furniſh us with it, if we are but willing to receive it at his hand? I am of opinion, with reſpect to many of our youth, that if they had been properly inſtructed, and carefully watched over; if they could have ſeen the beauty of holineſs ſhine in the example of their parents, they would not have gone out ſo widely as they have. O, you parents of both ſexes! an important duty is required of you. Example your children in the practice of piety. Example ſpeaks louder than precept; its influence is far more extenſive; and while on the one hand, you are excited to a faithful diſcharge of your duty towards them, by the certain hope of a glorious reward; ſo on the other hand, the powerful ties of natural affection, the warm ſolicitude for the happineſs of thoſe you love, muſt ſtir you up to diligence in the work and ſervice appointed you.

Gather the children.

If, after your attentive care has been employed for their preſervation; if, after the forcible voice of example, you have called them to the perfecting

perfecting of holineſs in the fear of God, they will go, they will turn aſide, into the bye-ways and crooked paths of ſin and iniquity; they muſt ſtand by their own choice. You will have redeemed your own ſouls, and will be found in your lots at the end of time. A ponderous crown awaits; you will cloſe your eyes, and open them to the boundleſs fruition of unmixed joy, in a happy eternity.

We do ſometimes with ſorrow obſerve the unwearied labours of a parent's love, beſtowed without the deſired effect: it is mournful to ſee children pierce with bitterneſs and anxiety the breaſt that has been their ſupport in their infantile years; to fill that eye with ſorrow that has dropt over them the tear of maternal tenderneſs: it is a cruel thing for a child to mingle gall and wormwood in the cup of a parent deſcending to the grave! Let ſuch be aſſured that their own portion of gall and wormwood will be doubly increaſed thereby, in the ſolemn hour of juſt retribution.

But, O, beloved youth! I earneſtly deſire that you may never thus widely deviate from the paths of rectitude. It is on you the hopes of the preſent age muſt ſhortly devolve; may you wiſely chuſe an early ſubmiſſion to the holy diſcipline of the croſs of Chriſt, that you may come up as an army for God. Conſider the uncertainty of thy ſtay here: conſider the important buſineſs of life, and let the love of every unprofitable delight be ſwallowed up in the arduous purſuit of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.

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We are daily inſtructed by the powerful, eloquent language of mortality. Death invades all ranks, ſnatches thoſe of all ages from the buſy ſtage of life. She who was yeſterday ſurrounded with nuptial joys, muſt to-morrow be confined within the cold encloſure of the ſilent grave.

Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her cloſet.

Let the young be joyous, and thoſe who are in the bloom of life leave every thing which tends to retard their progreſs towards the city of the ſaints ſolemnity: let them relinquiſh their moſt exalted ſatisfactions, rather than neglect to lay hold on the joys of God's ſalvation, which are unutterably more deſirable than all the ſin-pleaſing gratifications that this world can beſtow.

Let the prieſts, the miniſters of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar.

This ſhould not be confined to thoſe only whoſe mouths may be opened publicly amongſt you; for it belongs to all thoſe who preach to others by the regularity of a godly life and converſation. Although we are favoured with a living miniſtry of divine appointment, who dare not fill the ears of men with a repetition of unfelt truths, nor amuſe them with the unprofitable productions of an empty mind, but are concerned to diſcharge

 themſelves

themſelves faithfully, as ſtewards of the myſteries of God; yet let them be joined by all thoſe that mourn for the deſolation of Zion, by all who wiſh peace within her walls, and proſperity within her palaces.

Let us weep between the porch and the altar, ſaying, *Spare thy people, O Lord! and give not thy heritage to reproach, that the heathen ſhould rule over them: wherefore ſhould they ſay among the people, Where is their God.*

If we were thus unitedly engaged, in the behalf of our Iſrael, it may be that the Lord will again be jealous over his land, with an holy jealouſy; for I cannot think that a people whom he has raiſed by his invincible power, and ſo ſignally placed his name amongſt, were ever deſigned to be only the tranſient glory of a couple of centuries. I am ſtill revived by a ſecret hope of better times, when our Zion ſhall again put on her beautiful garments, and in her, and with her, ſhall ariſe *judges as at the firſt, and counſellors as at the beginning.*[h] Let us weep between the porch and the altar; let us intercede for the people, that the land may yet be ſpared.

The gracious ear of our heavenly Father is ſtill open to the ſupplications of his children, and I believe he will yet be jealous over his land, and pity his people.

[h] Iſa. i. 26.

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The time approaches when the great daſher in pieces will more and more come up amongſt us; and may all, who are broken by him, wait to be healed by the ariſing of his love: I ſhall not live to ſee it, but I live in the faith, and I believe I ſhall die in the faith, that the Lord of hoſts will yet beautify the place of his feet, that our Zion will yet become an eternal excellency, and Jeruſalem the praiſe of the whole earth.

Let us weep between the porch and the altar; for the Lord will yet be jealous over his land, and pity his people. The bowels of adorable condeſcenſion yet yearns over his children, with all the tenderneſs of a father's love?

How ſhall I give thee up, O Ephrain How ſhall I make thee as Admah, and ſet thee as Zeboim? How ſhall I caſt thee off from being a people before me?[1] By this moving and pathetic language would the great Father of the univerſe induce you to return to the arms of everlaſting mercy; and if we, who are placed as watchmen in Zion, faithfully diſcharge the truſt repoſed in us, we ſhall be made inſtrumental in gathering the ſcattered and diſperſed ſheep, from the eaſt and from the weſt, from the north and from the ſouth, to the great Shepherd, to the one ſheepfold, and finally obtain an admittance into thoſe glorious manſions, where

[1] Hoſea xi. 8.

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the morning ſtars join in ſinging hallelujahs! and where the *ſons of God* for ever *ſhout for joy*.

Now unto the King, eternal, immortal, and inviſible, the only God, be honour and praiſe for ever and ever.

Job xxxviii. 7.